

5 DEC 1961

Division of Responsibility within NRO

Handwritten: This given to [redacted] 7 Dec. at 4:5. agreed to by change by phone

1. The NRO is composed of certain offices within the Department of the Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency. It is headed by co-directors each of whom acts using the authority of his overt position within his own organization. The NRO has inherited responsibility for several reconnaissance programs which are in different stages of development and operation and which have been managed both technically, operationally, and with respect to security, in somewhat different fashions.

2. There exists today a workable and well understood division of responsibility between the two offices for the several programs with which the NRO is concerned. It is contemplated that there will be no immediate change in the established division of responsibility but consideration will be given to a redefinition of responsibilities for those programs that are today in their earlier stages in such a way as to make the best use of the capabilities of the two participating organizations.

3. The present allocation of responsibilities with respect to the major programs is as follows:

a. CORONA/MURAL/ARGON: The Air Force has primary responsibility for: (1) launch scheduling and launching; (2) orbit and recovery operations; (3) development and procurement of boosters, orbiting vehicles, and elint payloads. CIA has primary responsibility for (1) targeting; (2) operational

NRO and USAF

review(s) completed.

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planning and control of payload operation; (3) development and procurement of photographic payloads and nose cones; (4) security.

b. SAMOS: The Air Force has primary responsibility for SAMOS with CIA in a supporting role. The latter is important particularly in target planning and in security planning.

c. OXCART: This is the primary responsibility of the CIA with the Air Force in a supporting role.

4. With respect especially to the later configurations of SAMOS and to other advanced systems, consideration will be given to gradual modification of this distribution of responsibilities. In general, it is clear that Air Force elements will retain primary responsibility for operations and for vehicle development and procurement. For the most part these activities not only can but must be "white", that is conducted in a reasonably public fashion. CIA's main contribution will be in target planning, serving as the communication channel for operational control, security, and that development and procurement which should be "black". More specifically, the following gradual changes will be considered:

a. It may soon be possible for all procurement of nose cones (recovery systems) to be white in which case this should be assumed by the Air Force.

b. It would appear that there will be an increasing pressure to conduct the development/procurement of at least certain cameras covertly; the CIA may assume a larger responsibility with respect to all such systems.

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5. Consideration will also be given in due time to the desirability of gradually converting the NRO into a more unified single office with a single directing head. This development presumably will require a delegation of authority from both the Secretary of Defense and the Director of Central Intelligence to the Director of the NRO so as to permit him to exercise an appropriate degree of control over elements of both agencies. It might also render appropriate some redistribution of responsibilities as between the two components of the NRO and a change in budgetary procedures.

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sent changed*

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